Will He Want the Old Job Back?—The Soldier's Problem

By Cornelia Sterrett Penfield

GETTING a job and then either keeping it or finding a better is the preoccupation of most of us.

About seventeen months ago the selective service act began taking away that preoccupation from several-odd million Americans, and indirectly turned their individual jobs over to temporary substitutes. The several-odd million went into training for an entirely new job, the overthrow of militarism, and when last reported were definitely headed in the direction of considerable success.

Now, with the signing of the armistice, has come a frenzied question, "What will happen to the old job?" The temporary substitute would perhaps prefer to be permanent. "When the boys come back" has a threatening sound to him; and while he would not for worlds have had the war maintained for his especial benefit, he is slightly anxious and very interrogative.

His interrogation may be answered briefly and authoritatively. It is unlikely that the soldier for whom he substituted is going to return to that particular job, because there is in all probability a very much better job for which that particular soldier is qualified by this time, provided that he has profited by his advantages.

In other words, there are going to be jobs enough to go all the way round and lap over. The conscientious war worker who has made good at his assignment will have every chance of continuing indefinitely. The only worker who need worry is the industrial slacker who has slipped into a comfortable position that is entirely too big for him and that he found in an hour of stressful labor shortage.

It was with the intention of conducting a bit of research into the future job of the soldier that the writer went to Washington. After three days of prefatory interviews with sundry courteous staff officers it appeared that the story of the preparation of the American soldier for ultimate civil life can scarcely be compressed into scant space.

Therefore, instead of the comprehensive, it seemed wisest to consider the intensive, concentrating upon the training given a very small segment of only one fraction of the army—the engineers, erstwhile termed the "sappers" in recognition of their former chief function of digging saps and mines beneath the enemy fortifications.

Apparently the growth of the engineers has been consistent with that of the entire army, as at present every important function of skilled labor seems to be part of the repertory of the "sappers," and although nominally a non-combatant branch of the service, there is on record for all time the achievement of the pioneer regiment that stopped the German advance a year ago with shovels and picks and maintained the liaison of the Allied forces at a strategic point. After observing the very stern bayonet drilling of several engineer regiments, I am inclined to consider that the "shovels and picks" were a bit of poetic embroidery; but the fact remains that the Germans were stopped—and stopped by "sappers." And any engineer, private or officer, will furnish further details most willingly.

Oxy-acetylene welding at the vocational schools, Washington Barracks, D. C.
—Photo passed by censor

Technical Training for the Soldier

Since the development of technical training throughout the army has been so rapid during the last year, and especially during the last six months, the results obtained are unbelievable, and were only made possible by intensive work, from which everything not bearing directly upon military efficiency had been eliminated.

Perhaps the most apt example of what was done is given by the trade schools at Washington Barracks. What has been done there on a small scale is illustrative of the widespread work being at present accomplished by various vocational training units of the Students' Army Training Corps throughout the country, from which ultimately there may be returned to civilian life a wealth of skilled laborers in every calling.

The S. A. T. C., however, although impressively large, is younger than the vocational units at the training camps, and far, far younger than the barracks, and at present there is a careful distinction to be drawn between the S. A. T. C., which is administered by the committee on education and special training of the War Department, and the vocational schools of the cantonments, which are under the jurisdiction of the engineer corps of the army.

At the time of our declaration of war against Germany Washington Barracks was mainly devoted to instructing the embryo sapper, fresh from West Point, in the special training of his chosen branch of the service. Although there were other minor activities at the post, it was primarily the Engineer Officers' Training School, a post-graduate addendum to West Point.

With the outbreak of the war it became immediately necessary to provide training for privates as well as for officers, and Washington Barracks became the first logical school for that training. Subsequently it has been almost obscured by the aggregation of schools for vocational training of soldiers now under the War Department, but it remains the most interesting and representative of the work which immediately devolved upon the pioneer regiments.

For every division to go overseas a pioneer regiment of sappers, prepared for any emergency, was assigned to undertake the very various incidental work of maintenance and repair. When one considers that in the entire regular army as it was in March, 1917, there were but three pioneer regiments, numbering—with the inclusion of an engineer detachment at West Point, one mounted company and one band—in all, 4,125 officers and enlisted men—some idea of the expansion necessary to the present resultant may be hinted.

When one takes into consideration, moreover, the thousand-and-one duties of each pioneer regiment for which the private is prepared, the wonder grows yet more.

Where the Sapper Comes in

Picture a division advancing. There is not a mile during which the success of that advance does not in some detail depend upon the skill of the men in the pioneer regiment.

The advance is made, for example, over terrain carefully mapped by the topographers, copied by the draftsmen and referred to the lithographers, who have prepared the copies of the maps which are distributed to the staff and company officers.

Without the sapper regiment the advance might be halted by a ravine, or by a river over which formerly was a bridge, destroyed by the enemy. There is no halt, however, because of a new bridge, flung across by the engineers in an incredibly brief time. It is a question whether the more spectacular achievement in the bridge-building is afforded by the pontoon structure, which may be ready in seventeen minutes to pass the division over a river 225 feet wide, or by the building of a tied bridge thirty feet long in half an hour from the moment there was nothing but the ravine and the trees at hand; in that half hour the trees have been felled and the bridge prepared for the passage of the division.

There is a broken axle reported from one of the supply trucks. Time was when the truck would be perforce abandoned beside the road and the load added to the already burdened capacity of another truck. Again the engineers to the rescue! This time the oxy-acetylene welder comes to the fore and speedily sets the truck back on the road, sound as ever.

Every Vocation in the Dictionary

It is possible to follow through the various activities of this imaginary division and its dependence upon the pioneer regiment indefinitely, since the vocational schools at Camp Humphreys, Virginia, include almost every practical vocation in the dictionary, from blacksmithing to well drilling. Some few of the subjects are: Carpentry, foundry work, lumbering, mining, printing, photography, rigging, surveying, typing, dock construction, steam engineering, pipe laying and highway engineering.

Fourteen schools were established at Washington Barracks when Camp Humphreys was only a project on the army maps. The fourteen schools at the barracks comprised, and still do comprise, although somewhat eclipsed by the magnitude of that very young camp twenty miles down the river—lithography, carpentry, photography, surveying, welding, blacksmithing, rigging, drafting, stenography, gas engine maintenance and repair, plumbing, masonry and electricity.

While each subject is taught wholly in its military application, it is safe to say that the intensive training given is going to be of immeasurable value to the soldiers who have gone through any one of the schools. By reason of the emergencies which must be met immediately by the pioneer regiment in actual service the work must be swift and thorough. Because of the stern occasions for accuracy, when one mistake may entail disaster for the whole division, the preparation for that work must be beyond all standards for civilian instruction. Therefore, the schooling is an experience which will produce skilled laborers who can never outgrow their military exactness, which possibly will introduce a wholly new factor into the labor situation.

The future of the fourteen schools at the barracks is at this writing indeterminate. Their past is an amazing record of military efficiency.

In addition to retaining some functions as an engineer officers' training camp, at the beginning of the war, the barracks became the training camp for the 1st Replacement Regiment of Engineers. This regiment was trained for replacement only, which meant that it never went overseas as itself, serving to provide such skilled privates as were needed from time to time to replace casualties or to expand the strength of special details. In other words, after a sufficient number of men had completed their training for pioneer service a "regiment" was sent across to France to be used there according to the needs of the organized regiments at the front; ten gas engine men might be sent from the port of debarkation to one pioneer regiment; two blacksmiths and five stenographers to another, and so the "regiment" would be split until it ceased to be recognizable. Meanwhile a successive "regiment" might arrive in France, and still a third be in training at the barracks; while taking no heed of transient graduates the mother regiment in Washington would remain the "1st Replacement Regiment of Engineers" and would continue to draw promising privates to the special schools.

It would be very pleasant to picture a poor, unskilled laboring man, who had always had a secret hankering after training in some trade, and who found his wish gratified by the opportunity offered at the barracks. It may be that if a rumored plan of the War Department is carried out the ambitious untrained private may yet have his wish fulfilled. As a matter of fact, however, the vocational schools have drawn their candidates, with but few exceptions, from men already possessing at least a rudimentary knowledge of the work at hand.

Qualified men in training camps, qualified draftees and men especially inducted into service found their talents put to immediate use. They were given cards to be filled out. These cards listed the fourteen schools, and first and second choices were made by the candidate to indicate his preference for instruction at one or the other school.

On the reverse of the card the candidate's possibly amateur zeal was abruptly brought to proof by three curt questions, each with two subsequent dotted lines upon which the over-eager volunteer had to confess himself: "(1) What experience have you had in your first choice? (2) What experience have you had in your second choice? (3) What experience have you had in any other trade mentioned on the other side of this card?"

If the questions were not accurately answered any discrepancy was sure to be revealed by the candidate's first day's work, although there was no unreasonable objection to giving a serious worker a second chance at another school than that for which he considered himself best fitted. So it frequently happened that a mediocre carpenter did much better at rigging, and if so he was transferred according to his better talent.

What an Expert Rigger Might Accomplish

The classes in rigging, by the way, should brighten the "moving days" of our civilian future. One expert rigger, if he retains only the facility acquired in the army, should be able to direct the transference of every piano in New York somewhere to somewhere else between dewy dawn and starry eve of one day; it may be he can hoist a safe to the twentieth floor of an office building so swiftly that a crowd will have no time to gather; those will be the halcyon hours, but New York would never be quite the same.

Once admitted to the schools the possibilities of intensive training are revealed. It is authoritatively stated with considerable pride at the barracks that a reasonably literate candidate can be taken in hand by the stenographic instructors and in six weeks be competent to undertake any clerical work necessary at headquarters. In four weeks he should master the fundamentals of stenography and typewriting, and since his practice is concentrated upon the usual clerical needs of the post, he acquires the practical application simultaneously with the technical knowledge. During this four weeks his military training does not suffer, as he stands reveille and retreat daily and has one hour of drill in addition. Should the demand permit of the extension of the work from four weeks to six, the additional fortnight will round off his vocational work and prepare him for favorable comparison with the graduate of any non-military stenographic school on record.

Perhaps the astonishing results that have been obtained at the barracks are due to the extraordinary corps of instructors. When the schools were first organized the instructors for the second classes were the best workmen in the first classes, who were made non-coms. and retained at the barracks to instruct the succeeding classes. If in the subsequent classes a student excelled his instructor the instructor was sent out with that class for active service and the erstwhile student made instructor. By this process of survival the present instructors are proven the most competent of the many who have passed through the schools and should be a nucleus for an excellent vocational organization should such be the future purpose of the War Department.

The Art of Being a Soldier

Until Camp Humphreys sprang into existence the sappers were largely drawn from Washington Barracks, and were three months in training. Aside from the men specially recommended by cantonments as being skilled in some calling needful to a pioneer regiment the entrants at the barracks were frequently civilians direct from the local draft boards, which might have been asked to furnish masons, carpenters, plumbers or whatever needs could be supplied by them from the men classified in the draft questionnaires.

At the barracks these men were given for one month the inescapable infantry drill, which may have irked them considerably, but for which they were later profoundly grateful. They learned the fundamentals of the art of being a soldier—drill, guard mount, infrequently, and inadvertently kitchen police, together with all the little soldierly essentials, which includes grumbling considerably in private about life in general and life with the engineers in particular, and bragging considerably in public about the incomparable glory of being an engineer.

About the time they had taken on weight and appetite and had begun to despair of ever getting to France, they were transferred to Fort Foote down the river, an ancient Civil War landmark, where they discovered there was considerably more they did not know, including making camp, digging trenches and cheerfully hiking the two-day trip to Annapolis and back for rifle practice. This they did for another month.

By the beginning of the third month they were nearly soldiers, but not yet sappers, so back they went to the barracks for vocational training. If by chance they were supercilious concerning a simple little trade, such as blacksmithing or carpentry, considering that they had learned all that there was to be learned in practical civil life, another surprise began to come to them. There were countless tricks to their particular trade that had been developed for military purposes to a high degree, of which they suddenly discovered their own ignorance. They were not working by the hour or by the day, moreover. They were learning to work by the job at jobs that might mean life or death to a regiment in actual service. They worked side by side with men who were learning for the first time what to them was an old story, and occasionally the newcomers were amazingly intelligent at picking up the knack which the old-stagers overlooked.

Thoughts of the Future

Then, perhaps, some of them began to think ahead into the future. There was a big job ahead of them in France. The little jobs that might await them quietly at home after the war—or have been snatched up by some incompetent substitute—faded quite out of reckoning. There would be better jobs—perhaps elsewhere; there would be better pay—perhaps elsewhere; but pay and jobs alike cease to matter a very great deal when one is working hard all day, sleeping hard all night, growing in strength and ability, and quite willing to keep it all up indefinitely and expecting to get to France next week.

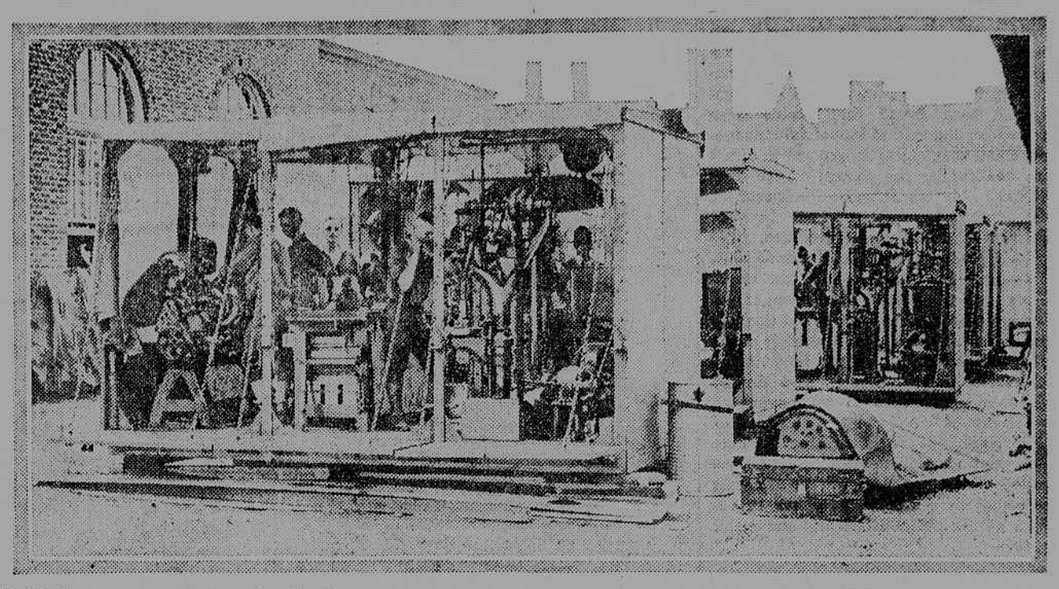
Then came the day! And heartfelt gratuitous sympathy is hereby extended to every one who has never seen a regiment leave camp for overseas! Especially a sapper regiment!

Since the regiment was so shortly to be split into fractions necessary to repair the casualties already in service, the organization was prepared at the barracks for the ultimate disorganization—non-commissioned officers were reduced to private status. Not a non-com. worried about that little detail; he was getting to France; that was sufficient glory. Commissioned officers were apportioned according to definite requirements rather than to those which have been so carefully studied by all of us in the many little instructive works destined for civilian purchasers. Every man was grinning, and every man's back merrily bore the appalling assortment of hardware and upholstery which comprises "heavy marching order."

Then followed the most indecorous retreat rollcall in the regimental history. The lack of decorum was a Gargantuan joke. One could picture the regiment, a shapeless, happy giant, hugely enjoying the vast humor in the hint that any one would be absent. Not go to France? Huh!

The rollcall ended, across the mellow sunset light flickered a haze of dust. The bugle notes of "Retreat" sounded, punctuated by the sunset gun. Then the regiment, grave again, stood at attention while the flag fluttered slowly down and the band beyond the tents played "The Star-Spangled Banner." There was a moment of silence, then a command, echoed along the regiment, and the band swung into the cadenced promise of "Over There." The regiment, bound overseas, marched out across the parade ground, past the cheering and envious sappers who thronged the roadside, past general headquarters, where admiring guards yelled encouraging admonitions, and out of the gates, embarking on their great venture.

And will they come back, when they do, ready to drop unquestioningly into the first vacant niche, or ready to elbow efficient substitutes out of their former jobs? I, for one, doubt it.



Field shops—mounted on trucks for transportation or set up in the field. It is possible for workmen to save time by using the shops during an advance when the trucks are in motion
—Photo passed by Censor.

Wilson's 'Salad Days'

"THE ENGLISH REVIEW" prints a description of the President when he was a student, written by Edith G. Reid, who knew him in those early days. It is a little sentimental, the description, but it serves to illuminate between the rifts in the fog of memory something of the character of the young man who later became Chief Executive of the United States.

"At one of our relaxed moments this autumn I was sitting with three or four old friends in my long drawing-room. It was late in the afternoon—the tea hour, when the heavy curtains had been drawn, the fire lighted, and, though Hoover's card stuck in the window, there was enough food for comfort with consistency. Our thoughts and voices had dropped to the point of fatigue when some one remarked that Sargent was painting a portrait of Mr. Wilson. My memory went down the long years, meeting him gently, with a glow of the heart here and there, hearing his voice, remembering his vivid thoughts, until I came to the moment when I first consciously saw him. It was like taking up an old daguerreotype, and I wondered how Sargent's late portrait would compare with my early mental picture. Long I stayed with my friend that afternoon—long after the others had gone and my fire had smouldered. Would Mr. Sargent have the realizing imagination to see back to the beginning and follow the thread of his life until it brought him up to the man of to-day? Certainly, if Mr. Sargent catches the spirit of his subject, the portrait will but emphasize the dominant note that was struck in his youth; for there has been a singular continuity in the life of our President. In the ideals and purposes of his life there has been no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The tall young fellow, who carried his body with a certain diffident courtesy, never physically treading on your toes, was free mentally—there he led. I recall him as he came up, a graduate student, to the Johns Hopkins University, doubtless poorly equipped with this world's goods, but too wholesome for that to matter.

"Nothing and nobody in those early days could hold Mr. Wilson long from his life's quest. His spiritual and mental impulses were, in a sense, inspirations, and would sweep on past and over minor matters. He had not that quality so lauded by Americans—the quality of push—he was too scholarly for that; but there was a tremendous momentum in this young man that carried him from a simple student, with a very small haversack on his back, his assets in his brain—carried him to the presidency of Princeton, to fight for the democracy of opportunity; to the Governorship of New Jersey, to force just government; to the Presidency of the United States, to hold steadily above a distracted world the scales of universal justice. As the smallness of his student's room mattered not at all, provided he could think and write, so the bigness of the White House, if he keep true to himself, is merely a vantage ground from which to do his work for humanity.

"My daguerreotype shows a tall young man, whose clothes—one has to mention his clothes—were put on with so obvious a desire to show due respect to the function that he was attending, with so little thought for himself. He would never have done for a tailor's advertisement; but, though his clothes were too big for him, he was immeasurably too big for his clothes. That Georgia tailor proved so obviously that no amount of disregard to the anatomy of his victim could matter in the very least. Mr. Wilson was—he simply *was*. His kindly, humorous, intellectual face, so young, but so full of power; his graciousness of manner, so full of consideration and with so little of condescension, showed plainly the hallmarks of his ancestry, Southern, Scotch, Irish, American—he looked them all; Southern, by those dreadful clothes and gentle manners; Scotch, by stiff integrity; Irish, by his humor; and American, in being at once full of idealism and of practical common sense.

"Our acquaintance warmed into friendship, strange to say, at one of those functions devised, I believe, to show how cowed can become the spirit of man, how brave the spirit of woman—a big evening reception. Women ordained them, men attend them, because of some woman. We had been squeezed to the very wall of our hostess's party drawing-room and sank upon some mercifully leftover seats. The centre of the room had become an arena, where the odds were up as to whether the untrained gentlemen waiters could successfully balance plates of olio, broiled oysters and chicken croquettes, and carry them deftly over the heads of the company, finally depositing them, charged with their perilous stuff, into the hands of their chosen fair ones. We, from our cosey corner, watched with keenest interest the heroes and heroines of this, to me, memorable evening. The company became merely a pageant for our delight. We wondered what it was all about—whether the people had food at home, that they should struggle and suffer for it like that. We were both of us young then and wished to be very wise—I, gay, arrogant, undisciplined; he, very humble, for he was already in harness, and his fresh, creative mind bowed to wisdom. He studied his premises and weighed his conclusions. But the trivial only held him as the lightest of surface comedies; he quickly cut through them to the great problems of past, present, and future. The unessential held him hardly at all; but, because of his humor, his talk was never ponderous; and also because of a certain vitalizing quality that was his in a degree I have never known in any other person. He was subjective only inasmuch as he minded your blame and cared for your praise; for the rest, he was purely objective. The big problems of humanity consumed him; they were so much bigger than himself that he forgot himself. Never in the world was it truer of any one than of him that he had a vision, but that he kept his feet on the ground; and that makes the order of person who arrives and carries others with him.

"Mr. Wilson was not an individualist. It was not for the love of one child, but for the love of all children, that their problems concerned him. Not the problem of one favored and dear youth, but the problems of all youth, fired him; not the development of the South alone, but the development of his entire country, absorbed him. He saw things in large proportions, and his constructive imagination was not that of the adventurer or even the explorer; it was that of the pioneer, with the pioneer's dauntless courage—but caution. Beyond the felled forest and cut paths and dangers overcome he saw peaceful homes, and thrifty farms, and simple, unsophisticated schools, and spires of little churches.

"From early youth he had in his mind the ardent desire to show to his country what he read in the motives and accomplishments and defeats of the Civil War. Southern by birth and breeding, he was never provincial—there was no muddling of mind and heart. He loved his country from east to west, from north to south, and looked out with clear eyes to the universal problems of the United States. A democratic university was his ideal. He felt that knowledge led to wisdom, and wisdom to righteousness; and that was a road which all who would should be able to take without handicap; and so, with a carelessness of self-interest that was simply amazing, he struck mighty blows, that there should be no sign 'Private Property' marked over this great highway. Only apparently was he defeated, for his strokes are still echoing and every college in the land has stopped and listened."

A Zion in Missouri

By J. W. Morrison

ANOTHER head of the Mormon Church is dead, and still the site of the great temple, a temple of such grandeur as the world never knew, is a weed grown waste in a Missouri town; and the streets of that town, instead of being paved with gold, are of asphalt and macadam. But still the chosen people do not despair, and that weedy waste is kept sacred, for in His own time the Lord will come in the night, and when morning dawns there will stand such a temple as mortal eyes never saw.

That is the law. It was given in a divine revelation to Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church and uncle of President Smith, who died last week. Salt Lake is the City of the Saints, but it is not Zion. Zion is the town of Independence, Mo., now a suburb of Kansas City. There was the Garden of Eden, and out from it went Adam for his transgression. Only a few miles away is a pile of stones where the First Man, driven out with his mate from the Garden, raised an altar and offered sacrifices unto the Lord.

Those things are Mormon gospel. The first Joseph Smith said they were spoken by God through him, and they stand to-day among the Mormons as a divine revelation. Among the latest of his acts before he was shot by lynchers at Carthage, Ill., was the reiteration by Joseph Smith that Independence was the real Zion and that the Mormons should one day return there to gather about the great temple. And, as a matter of fact, the Mormons are returning there. For years they have been quietly drifting back to the place from which a mob drove them more than three-quarters of a century ago, and now Independence, a little city of 15,000 persons, is entirely dominated by them. They have clustered as much as possible about the temple site, but have not infringed upon it. Their church, the biggest in the town, stands just across the street from the temple site. It is a fine structure of stone, but it will stand only until the building of the Lord's temple.

The revelation regarding Independence was given in the early and troublous days of the Mormon Church, or, to give it its official title, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The Angel Moroni had appeared to young Joseph Smith at his home near Palmyra, N. Y., and had revealed to him the hiding place of the plates of gold on which was written the Book of Mormon. Smith and his followers, finding New York unfriendly, had moved to Ohio and again found themselves unwelcome. Then Smith sent scouts into the wilderness to find a site where the church could have peace. The scouts returned with glowing reports of the country in and around the little frontier town of Independence, Mo. Smith resolved to see it for himself. He and his companions went by boat to St. Louis, but had to walk the three hundred miles across Missouri to Independence. Smith was enraptured with what he found. In truth, it is one of the fairest regions in America. Splendid hills overlook valleys of great fertility; and the Missouri River, winding its tortuous way to the Mississippi, adds the scenic touch that delights the artistic eye. The Lord quite agreed with Smith's choice. In a few days the prophet announced that he had received a divine revelation that here was the New Jerusalem, the future city of Christ, where the Lord was to rule over the Saints as a temporal king in "power and great glory." The voice of the Lord, speaking through Joseph Smith, proclaimed:

"This is the land of promise and the place for the City of Zion. And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom, behold the place which is now called Independence is the centre place, and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the Court House, wherefore it is wisdom that the land should be purchased by the Saints."

Accordingly, the land was purchased, and the temple site was solemnly marked and dedicated. To this day it has remained in the possession of the Mormons and has never been built upon. It was further revealed that Independence, or Zion, as the Mormons called it, was to be a city surpassing in splendor anything known in ancient or modern times. Buildings of gleaming walls should line streets of pure gold. It was in every way to be a city worthy of the seat of the temporal power of Christ when He should come to rule as King over His Saints, all the rest of the world having been destroyed. The lost tribes of Israel, Smith revealed, were encircled by great walls of ice at the North Pole, but these walls would melt, and the lost tribes would hasten to Zion, bearing great loads of gold and silver. It was also revealed to Smith that this was the site of the Garden of Eden, and he pointed out the pile of stones which, he told his followers, was the banished Adam's altar.

But the people of the Missouri community did not like their new neighbors. Troubles multiplied, and finally a mob drove the Mormons away, killing many of them and destroying their property. Smith yielded to force of arms, but he called on his followers not to sell their property in Independence. It was the true Zion, he said, the site of the temple, and the Mormons would surely return.

From Missouri the Mormons went to Nauvoo, Ill. There the revelation permitting polygamy was given. Smith and his brother Hyrum were arrested, and were taken from jail by a mob and shot. Brigham Young succeeded to the head of the Church and led the Saints across plains and mountains to Salt Lake, where they built a city in the desert and prospered amazingly. The great temple there is a marvel of architecture, but it was built by hands. That vacant lot at Independence still awaits the Lord's masterpiece.